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Back in 1948 in the Alger Hiss case there were leaks of testimony before a congressional committee, arguments over pre-trial publicity including television coverage, attempts to discredit a witness, and accusations that high Justice Department officials thwarted efforts of underlings to prosecute.

"If it hadn't been for the Hiss case, you would have been elected president of the United States.' This was the conclusion of one of my best friends after the election of 1960.

"But another good friend told me just as sincerely, 'If it hadn't been for the Hiss case, you never would have been vice president of the United States or candidate for president.'

The ironies persist. Nixon was a 35-year-old freshman congressman from California when a Time magazine senior editor, Whittaker Chambers, accused Hiss, a highly respected former State Department employee, of espionage for the Soviet Union.

As hearings continued into the winter of 1948 and led to a federal grand jury investigation, Nixon remained the firmest advocate of Chambers's truthfulness against Hiss's denials.

His position was vindicated when Hiss was convicted of perjury more than a year later, at the second two trials. But the committee's tactics remained targets of criticism.

The case made him a national figure, helped boost him into the Senate, and contributed to his selection by Dwight D. Eisenhower as Republican vice presidential nominee in 1952.

The two cases are similar in that neither involves personal financial gain for officials involved.

In the Hiss case, the issue was Communist infiltration of

In Watergate, the issue is use of illegal wiretapping and burglary of Democratic Party headquarters, covering up participation by officials of Nixon's re-election campaign and White House staff, and other illegal activities aimed at political enemies.

In both cases, emotions ran high. Two Supreme Court justices, Felix Frankfurter and Stanley Reed, testified as character witnesses at Hiss's trial. The late secretary of state, Dean Acheson, said, "Alger Hiss and I became friends and we remain friends."

The House committee was criticized for taking public testimony from Chambers, a chubby and unprepossessing witness, without checking it in advance.

After Chambers testified Aug.

On the question of pre-trial publicity, former Secretary of Commerce Maurice H. Stans and former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell resisted through their lawyers demands by the Senate Watergate committee that they testify at its televised hearings.

Both cited their pending indictments in New York City on charges of perjury and conspiracy to defraud in a campaign contribution case.

Nixon, writing about the first public confrontation between Hiss and Chambers on Aug. 25, 1948, lamented that so few people saw it on television.

"Klieg lights and television cameras were set up for the first major congressional hearing ever to be televised," he wrote.